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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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INTERVIEWEE: Gordon C. Case

INTERVIEWER: Michael Paré

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Captain Gordon C. Case

Interviewed 22 August, 2006

By Michael Paré

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum, Oral History Program, interview with Chris Case. Recorded on 22 August, 2006, at Ottawa. Interviewed by Michael Paré. Tape one, Side one.

CASE: My name is Chris Case. My last name is spelt C-A-S-E [spells last name].

INTERVIEWER: We both signed a legal release, is that correct?

CASE: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us where and when you were born?

CASE: [Laughs] Yeah, I was born in Woodstock, Ontario, on the 23rd of November, 1959.

INTERVIEWER: Did you grow up in Woodstock?

CASE: Yeah, in the same house. My parents were from Woodstock. My grandparents are from Woodstock. My parents are still there. My cousins are still there. I lived at home until I was 18 and then I went off to the University of Western Ontario to do a BA in History.

INTERVIEWER: Did you join the Forces after university?

CASE: Well actually, I first joined as a Reservist as an 18 year old the summer before I went to Western. I joined the 4th Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, which is a Reserve Infantry Unit based out of London and Stratford. So when I was in school I was a part time officer as well. I was selected for officer training the year after I started Western; I started there in the fall of '78. So I did infantry training in Gagetown, reclassified to logistics in '82. I was a Reservist for seven and a half years, so when I transferred in '85 to the Regular Force it was something I was relatively familiar with, at least I thought I was.

INTERVIEWER: What prompted you to join the Regular Force?

CASE: [Laughs] That's always a tough question. I had always been interested in the military. I don't know, maybe it was just part of growing up. I always had the feeling that, you know, what my dad and what all my friends' dads did during the Second World War was something honorable, but the Military always interested me. Joining the Regular Force in '85, it just seemed to be the right thing to do at the time. I graduated from university. I work for a little bit of time in the food service industry and I really wasn't enjoying what I was doing and I finally made up my mind, to heck with it.

I mean, Reservists always have—it's a funny thing, if you never been a Reservist it's sometimes hard to appreciate for those who serve full time. I see this having worked on both sides of the fence. A lot of Reservists have a sort of prejudice against the Regular Force. I don't know, maybe it's a fear of commitment. I don't know what it is, but I guess I was a long time Reservist. I suppose to a certain degree that's what held me back. but once I made the decision, you know it seem like the right decision at the time and, like I said, I really wasn't enjoying what I was doing on civy street so it kind of made it easy.

INTERVIEWER: So you did your training at Borden, presumably?

CASE: Yeah, I was a component transfer so because I had done infantry—I went through what was called the RESO, Reserve Entry Scheme Officer, so I had done regular force infantry training in Gagetown and I did the RESO logistics program in Borden. I was credited with having done basic officer training, I guess they figured if I had been able to do Phase II Infantry that I could handle BOTC , I didn't have to do that again. When I joined I merely went to 2 Service Battalion in Petawawa. Then, for about the next nine months I was on TD in Borden. I would go down and do a course, come back for a few weeks and go back. I did four courses over the duration of 1986. I went through all that and then I went back and became a platoon commander.

INTERVIEWER: A platoon commander in…

CASE: Transportation Company. I was transportation specialist. That is what I was doing when I was a Reserve Officer, so for me there was no question as a Regular that's what I wanted to do. My first tour I did a year and a half as a Platoon Commander. The last year I was there I was the Administrative Officer within the company. I worked for a guy by the name of Major Cantin [?]), which I know you know. After that I went to RSS Toronto, Regular Support Staff working with the Reserves, got married there so that was a milestone. I worked a year and a half at the unit at Reservist Service Battalion, year and a half as G-4 Ops in the district. Postings after that, I went to HQ 1 Canadian Division in Kingston. Did a number of jobs when I was there. I did an operational tour to Somalia while I was there. After Kingston it was back to Petawawa as G-4 Transportation in HQ 2CMBG. Very busy time. Three years, lots of brigade movement, crash moves like the floods, the ice storm. Another operational tour, this time to Bosnia. In '98 I moved to—we came here to Ottawa and I have been here ever since working at NDHQ. I've worked Material Traffic. For three years I was in Movement Doctrine. I

was the Canadian Force's, I suppose you could call it the guru, for a movement planning tool called GEMS[?] . It produces a thing called—you know, movement staff tables and that sort of a deal. I was the project manager for that. The last four years I worked—I went over to the IM Group. I got a project management certificate. I was doing project management stuff with a couple of different projects and now I'm back in the Log world in an organization called Canadian Operational Support Command. Which, curiously enough, if you take the new Operational Commands and put them all together, to my mind, it bears a striking resemblance to Canadian Forces HQ [laughs] going back a few years.

INTERVIEWER: So most, if not all, your Regular Force service has had something to do with transportation and movements.

CASE: A lot of it, yeah. I have done a lot of different things. I suppose you could say I'm well rounded. Project management, combat service support in general. My operational experience is all movements experience.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's turn to your tour in Somalia. Perhaps if you could tell us how it happened that you were selected for this deployment?

CASE: [Laughs] Well, that's a darn good question. You would probably have to ask the guy who picked me. We had just gotten to Kingston, moved there in the summer of '92. My wife, Natasha, was eight months pregnant with our first girl. She was born in October. We were fairly new to Kingston. It was December; it was the first week of December. For some reason I'm thinking the 7th, but maybe my memory is playing games with me—I got a phone call…

INTERVIEWER: [inaudible]

CASE: Yeah, so I got a phone call. I was working as an augmentee at the staff college for their final exercises and I was working away. One of the directing staff came over and said, "You are wanted on the phone." I went over to the phone, it was my boss, and he says, "You have been selected, it was almost like, Congratulations! You have just won an all expense paid trip to…" I mean, I knew what was going on. I had been watching the news. I mean, Somalia was really in the news at that time. You couldn't get around it. All you saw that December were pictures of people dying of starvation in this place.

The were a couple of American students on the course and they were leaving early because they were part of 10 Mountain Division and 10 Mountain Division was part of the US contingent that went, so they had already been told. I was told to drop what I was doing and get back up to the HQ. I was working at HQ 1 Canadian Division. I was on the transportation staff. There was me and a major. What they were doing is, we were deploying a joint HQ out of Kingston. The airborne battle group had already been slated to go to Somalia. Originally to go to a place called Bossasso, which is in the northern part of the country.

INTERVIEWER: Can you spell that?

CASE: I think it is spelled B-O-S-S-A-O or B-O-S-S-A-S-S-O [spells name], I think, I'm not sure. I haven't looked at a map of Somalia in awhile. So they were already slated to go, but it was a brand new mission. The Prime Minister of the day was Mulroney and he had been talking to George Bush Sr. and it was going to be an American-led coalition. As soon as I found out, I called my wife and gave her the happy news. I think it was that weekend. It was about a week afterwards we went to Camp Pendleton, about half a dozen of us, to do some coordination with the US Marine Corps. They were providing the overall HQ for this thing.

INTERVIEWER: This was California?

CASE: Yeah, Pendleton in California. We flew down there – just a blur, just an absolute blur. There was about two weeks from the time I was told I was going and we were gone.

INTERVIEWER: Now was there a group from the Divisional HQ that went or were you picked individually?

CASE: Well, what they did was pick people from all the various sections of the HQ so there was—I mean the guy who was the G-1, he went. I was one of two transportation guys, so the major stayed behind and I went. One of the supply guys went, a bunch of guys from the Ops side, you know the signallers. A Signals Troop I guess, plus. A reinforced Signal Troop from the Signal Regiment, but this is all sort of cobbled together in very short order. Like I say, I was gone in two weeks.

INTERVIEWER: So there was no plan or standard operating procedure to form an Operational HQ from the Divisional HQ?

CASE: I was pretty fast. It was really fast. I remember sitting on a couple of meetings, the guys were down from NDHQ, from Army HQ and it was just a whirlwind. I mean, you really didn't have a whole lot of time to do a whole lot of thinking.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of operational briefings did you get before deployment? If any?

CASE: [Laughs] There wasn't much, and again it's been a few years. I don't remember a whole lot. I remember reading some of Sitreps the morning that I left. I had already said goodbye to my wife and daughter. They went down to—her dad was living in New Jersey at the time. He was the senior exec with Nabisco and that's where they were living. The plan was, I ship them off, they were going there for Christmas and then down to her mom's place in Florida. My wife's parents were divorced. So that was our game plan because she didn't know anybody in Kingston, and Anne Marie was two months old. Her mom had offered that while Chris is gone, come on down and stay with me. My

wife's younger sister was there too, so we all jumped at it. So I had said goodbye to them and I remember reading a few Sitreps before I left. There was one that stuck in mind and I'll never forget it. I was reading along, the Sitrep was maybe a day or two old and they were talking about this American solder and a little place called Baledogle, B-A-L-E-D-O-G-L-E [spells name], it's about 60 klicks outside of Mogadishu. This guy had been bitten by a puff adder. [Chuckles] He had a sleeping bag, he was sleeping on the ground and this snake crawled into his sleeping bag and bite him under the armpit. He kills the snake somehow and he goes over to his company medic—I'm reading this in the Sitrep. He sort of dings the snake and says to his medic, "Should I be worried?" [Laughs] I am definitely afraid of snakes, so that was the big thing that I remember.

INTERVIEWER: That set the tone.

CASE: It set the tone. It wasn't the first or the last time snakes came up on the tour. I heard about a couple of phone calls—the other thing that really sticks in mind about just before leaving was one of the guys that went in the advance party. He was a Vandoo major, I can't remember his name, it doesn't matter. I think he was a graduate of the SAS course and he was a pretty tough guy as I recall. He had phoned back and said that what he was seeing there was the most austere environment he had ever come across. Today, some guys overseas get cultural briefings. You get briefings on flora and fauna, the whole situation. All I recall knowing was what I was watching on TV and reading just a couple of Sitreps, having just a general idea of what was happening. But in detail, I had no idea.

INTERVIEWER: Now apart from arranging for your family to stay with your in-laws, what other personal arrangements do you recall having to make?

CASE: Well, we had Christmas early. I remember my wife's dad calling. They were living in Toronto. I remember talking to him on the phone and telling him I was going. I got to admit, I was a bit leery about the whole thing, especially with a new wife, a new baby and all that kind of stuff. I remember talking to him and he said, "Wow, you are going to be taking part in history. Do you know that?" I thought about it afterwards and I thought a lot about that ever since. He was right. I think anyone who goes overseas, the first time especially, there's always a lot of, "Can I do this? What am I going to see when I get to the other end? What am I going to have to do? Who am I going to work with?" Because, really I knew that a large part of what my job was going to be was going to be coordinating the reception of all the stuff that was coming from Canada. And that was a big job.

I left Canada on the 22nd of December, arrived in Mogadishu Christmas Eve. We landed in Nairobi. We traveled in civilian clothing because we were commercial air. There were only half a dozen of us.

INTERVIEWER: Commercial air to Nairobi or all the way to Somalia?

CASE: Oh no, no, no. Commercial air to Nairobi. I'll back up just a little bit just to outline the way the mission was organized initially. The Airborne, as I said was suppose to go to this place called Bossasso. Well, part of their support element was HMCS PRESERVER, one of the AORs, the supply ships. The mission had changed radically. There was never any intention initially to go to Mogadishu. HMCS PRESERVER was offshore of Mogadishu and they had a land-based Maritime Support Logistics Detachment lead by a guy by the name of Lieutenant Commander Brian Wall. They were based out of Nairobi, so they met us at the airport, took us in. We got cleaned up and changed out of our civilian clothing, put on uniforms and all that sort of thing. And then we went by Hercules into Mogadishu and almost got killed on the way in. At the time, it was the busiest airport probably in the world. There were planes taking off and landing there every minute and there was only one strip at Mogadishu. As we were coming in, there was another aircraft taking off and our pilot had to take evasive action. Of course, we were all in the back of the Herc. We had no idea what was going on, found out afterwards. So that was exciting.

INTERVIEWER: Just going back to before leaving Canada, there was no preparatory training because it was an *adhoc* unit that was put together?

CASE: Pretty much. I don't remember any sort of training like that at all.

INTERVIEWER: What about personal equipment? Were you issued everything you needed before you left or did you have to get that in theater?

CASE: No, we were issued everything. Flak jacket, I remember clothing parades, needles parades. I still remember this guy, he was about 6' 4'', big tough infantry officer. I still remember standing in line and passing out when he got to the front of the line. We did all the needles parades, we did the Departure Assistance Group and they went through the whole thing. I increased my insurance quite a bit because we had no idea what was going on. I had really no idea what to expect there. The reality was a lot different than what I was anticipating.

INTERVIEWER: So you arrived in Mogadishu, you left on Christmas Eve or you…

CASE: …arrived there Christmas Eve. When we left, this was December so it was like –25 when we left here. Nairobi wasn't too bad. Nairobi's in the mountains, it was about 75-80 degrees there, but Mogadishu – and it was like this for a good five months – was typically 45 degrees C with 100% humidity and it was like that just about every day. You fly in, you're in an air conditioned Herc, and when the ramp goes down you literally walk into this wall of heat. I remember when the Airborne Battle Group was deploying their main body, I remember seeing guys from the Airborne Regiment, big tough paratroopers, you know 6' 4'' far bigger than I am. These guys would get to that door and they would rock back on their heels like someone had smacked them with a baseball bat right between the eyes. It was awesome. Two weeks to acclimatize.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do immediately on arrival?

CASE: Well, the first thing we did was they took us out to HMCS PRESERVER. That was where the HQ advance party was operating. We didn't have anything set up ashore, there was no signals. We had a portable, I think it was an INMAR SAT, Maritime Satellite Telephone. That was about the extent of what we had. So HQ, there was maybe about a dozen of us by the time my group showed up. We would operate from PRESERVER. We would go ashore every day, liaise with the Americans and all that kind of stuff and then make it back out to PRESERVER, sleep overnight and that sort of thing. PRESERVER was pretty crowded. They tossed about seven or eight of us in the bosun's hatch, which is right in the front of the ship. You go down this nice little steel ladder [laughs] into this, it's a work shop. That's where we were sleeping, but they had guys scattered everywhere.

INTERVIEWER: But you didn't have any working accommodations aboard?

CASE: The HQ was working out of, I think it was the captain's cabin. We had half of that, but it was really rudimentary. Mostly officers were going ashore during the day and teeing up with Americans.

INTERVIEWER: And where were the Americans at this time?

CASE: Oh, hell, they were already there in numbers. They were running the airport. They were running the port, the seaport. Their main HQ was at the old US Embassy compound, which is where we ended up. And we didn't have a whole lot of wheels when we were there either. I think we had two or three trucks to get around. We did a lot of hitchhiking, surprising for a Transportation Officer, but I hitchhiked a lot when I was there. [Laughs]

INTERVIEWER: When you arrived, how much of the Canadian force was there? Were you among the first?

CASE: I was one of the early ones. The Airborne Regiments their recce and advance parties, they had deployed around the middle of December. Some where between the 14th and the 17th, I don't remember the exact dates, but roughly around that time. Middle of December they had deployed. They were in this place called Baledogle and that is where Canada was originally supposed to go. That is where our guys were supposed to go originally. While I was enroute, the plan changed. The plan was evolving quite a bit during this initial stage. The Americans only landed on the beaches in early December. It took some time for them to get sorted out.

One of the first things that had to be reconciled was, because the mission was providing a secure environment for humanitarian relief to occur, the part of the country that we were operating in was divided up into what were called humanitarian relief sectors. The Australians ran one, Canada was given responsibility for one, the Italians had one, the Americans had one. I forget just who all else were running these things. Canada was

given the job of running the Belet Huen HRS, which was the furthest inland, right next door to the Ethiopian border, 350 km from Mogadishu.

Now, as a Log Officer, I just have to paint the picture for you. There's one road that goes from Mogadishu to Belet Huen. It was built – we're talking today in 2006 – this thing was probably built 40-50 years ago and the last time it was maintained was when it was built. Initially, there was a real challenge because the Airborne Regiment's advance party and a whole bunch of other stuff is sitting in Baledogle. So that stuff all had to be moved to Belet Huen. There was a Hercules detachment of six or seven Hercules operating out of Nairobi. There was an Airlift Control Element. There were about 15 or 20 Traffic Techs working to support the Nairobi operation and us in Mogadishu. The initial reception was utter pandemonium. You really had to be there to appreciate it. On a daily basis we had Hercules transiting through from Nairobi, shuttling stuff from Baledogle to Belet Huen.

INTERVIEWER: Baledogle was an old Somalian airbase, is that correct?

CASE: I never got there. It was a place on a map. I never saw the place. I don't what was there. Logistically, Belet Huen wasn't great either, but it was serviceable for what it was worth. You've got this operation going on. You've got Hercules going through every day moving all this stuff from Baledogle into Belet Huen. The Airborne Regiment's main body started arriving, I think it was the 27th or the 28th of December. They are coming in by Boeing landing in Mogadishu. They got off the plane, they would bomb up, get on the Hercules and head north. PRESERVER was off shore and it was just loaded to the gunwhales with a whole bunch of stuff that the Airborne Regiment needed. There were Sea King Helicopters every day—do you know what VertReppin is?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

CASE: Vertical Replenishment. So they are bringing in slung loads every day and dropping that at our little patch that we had carved out at the Mogadishu airport. And on top of all this, there are Galaxies and Starlifters bringing the joint HQ, which I was part of, from Trenton over and they were landing at the far side of the airport, which is where all the heavy stuff was being off loaded. So you've got all this stuff going on at the same time. For three weeks this went on. It was just an absolute blur. I have never worked so hard or for so long in my life, utterly amazing.

INTERVIEWER: Perhaps we can look now at what was the organization of the joint HQ that you belonged to, and then we can talk about what were your specific responsibilities in all of this.

CASE: Sure. It was pretty standard in a lot of ways. We were all called J whatever over there. There was J-1, which looks after personnel. There was J-2, which were the Int guys. J-3 were all the operators and they were subdivided into various sections, including Air Ops, Maritime Ops, Ground Ops. I worked in the J-4 Logistics Cell. That was run by a guy by the name of, he was a Major, I think he is still a Major now, yeah Major

Lloyd Giln[?]. He was the J-4, really sharp guy, really bright guy. He had a plans guy who was focusing just on logistics planning. He had an Ops guy, a Maintenance officer by the name of Bob Elbish[?], he's a Lieutenant Colonel now. And then there were the three functional guys. There was myself looking after transportation. I was a one-man band. There was a Supply guy and there was a Maintenance Captain.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any support staff?

CASE: There were a few clerks. There was a five section. J-5 looked after basically Civil Relations. We had a couple of Public Affairs Officers. There was a Legal Officer. The Padres were with the Airborne Battle Group. I think we had a couple of Medical Staff Officers and then there was the supporting Signals Troop, about 50-60 guys. And eventually—this is a bit later on because the organization evolved while we were there—there was a Defense and Security Platoon of about 40-50 guys from the Royal Canadian Dragoons. That was roughly the organization.

INTERVIEWER: Now what was the command relationship of your HQ with the Airborne Battle Group?

CASE: The Airborne Battle Group was under command. The commander of the Canadian Contingent was Col. Serge Labbé. He was the Force Commander, so all elements that were part of Canadian Joint Task Force Somalia came under him. That actually included the Airlift Control Element in Nairobi, which ruffled a lot of feathers in Air Command because typically they don't like to do that. But everything came under him – PRESERVER, the Hercules, the Airborne, everything.

INTERVIEWER: So this an Operational HQ and not just a National HQ?

CASE: Oh, very much so, very much so. For us on the Log side, every day was a challenge.

INTERVIEWER: Describe your particular job as J-4 Transportation.

CASE: Again, it evolved as the mission did. I gave you a little bit of flavor of what it was like when we got there. There just weren't enough people to handle all this stuff all at the same time. The guy who was running the Traffic Techs was a friend of mine, he was a captain then, a guy by the name of Ron Ovens, and he had about 15-16 Traffic Techs working for him and they were doing all their stuff. The deal I made with him was: you look after all the Hercules stuff here, I'll look after all the stuff that's coming in on the other side of the airfield, the stuff that was coming by Galaxy and Starlifter.

My daily routine for the first two or three weeks kind of went like this. We had hand-held radio communication with the ship, so I would get on the radio and talk to who ever was on duty at the HQ and I'd say: "What have we got coming today?" They would have copies of messages that had been received over night by the ship from Trenton saying "Galaxy, tail number 'whatever', left at this time with the following load". I had the

Task Force movement table, which had given to me, so I had a rough idea, I thought, of what was suppose to come. I had vehicle numbers and all the rest of this sort of thing. So that was kind of my starting point. I was dealing with two or three flights a day.

So my next trick was to hitchhike over to the—because we were at the other side of the airfield—so my next trick was to hitchhike over to the American side. I forgot to mention that we had a US Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel working with us. He was our liaison officer and he put me in touch with the guys to talk to. For the first two weeks I dealt with gunnery sergeants and staff sergeants, and they were great. I would go over there and I'd go to the Air Traffic Operations Centre and say, "OK. Right. Here's where I'm being told what is coming. I'd look on the screen and they would say, "OK, yup, we're expecting it at this time." I would then go to this gunnery sergeant and I would basically tee up the unload.

The thing I knew, I was pretty confident that if we just left it and things got offloaded on that side of the airport and we didn't grab onto it right away, it would have gone. It would disappear into the [laughs] American system and we would never see it again. So I would tee that up. I would tee up transportation to get any people that we had coming from that side of the airport over to the other side. And then I'd hitchhike back over to the other side of the airport where the Hercules lift was ongoing and see how things were going like that. It went like this for pretty much around the clock for a good two or three weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Typically, at that point, how many Galaxies were coming in every 24 hours?

CATAIN CASE: At least a couple of Galaxies, you know, Starlifters. Towards the tail end of that, our two ships arrived, so we had to arrange the offload of the ships in the port as well.

INTERVIEWER: These were the ships that were originally going to Northern Somalia?

CASE: That's correct, that's correct. So there was a container ship and there was a roll-on roll-off ship, which had all the Airborne Regiment's vehicles.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe how that operation went?

CASE: Pretty smooth, actually. The Transport Officer from the Airborne was a really, really switched on guy. He was an Infantry Officer, but a really switched on guy. He had a good team and they took care of the offload of the other ship. We borrowed a bunch of low-bed trailers from the Americans to move sea containers. That was one of our biggest problems when we got there because we knew we had this container ship that had about 220-230 sea containers stacked on it, but we had no place to put it. We needed hardstand to put it and all the good locations were being occupied by the Americans. That was one of the first things that Lloyd Gil and I had to do, in the midst of dealing with the flights coming in, we had to find a place to put this stuff. I remember one day, it

was the day after Christmas. I remember Lloyd saying, "I think I have a spot, let's go have a look". Three or four of us, we got in one of the very few trucks that we had and we went out to have a look. Well, [laughs] it was in northern Mogadishu, which the day after Christmas what we still called 'Indian Country'. You could sit at the airport at night and watch fire fights. You couldn't actually see them, but you could see the glow on the horizon. You could hear shooting going on. I remember we left the Embassy compound and we drove down this road and there was always people walking on this main road that went through town, thousands of people. To this day, I don't know where they were walking to. A million people living in this place and I don't know what the heck they were doing besides just trying to survive, but all kinds of people.

We got to this intersection, I guess about a mile or two down the road from the Embassy. Little café on the right, four guys playing cards. I think they were there for the entire six months I was there, same guys. I don't think they moved. Anyways, we turned right, drove about a hundred yards and all of a sudden there was nobody, just like nobody, absolutely nobody around. It was the weirdest feeling. As you know, I'm a historian. I do a lot of reading about guys who actually did 'it' for real in the Second World War, Korea, First World War. And all these guys talked about, you knew when you were at the front, not when it was really noisy but when it was really quiet, and you got this really weird feeling in your gut that said, 'Hey, we shouldn't be here', and you backed up. And that's what a lot of Second World War vets, from what I've read, had said. That's how I knew I was at the front. I think I had an idea what they were talking about. I can't describe it, it was just a really—jeez, we shouldn't be here, this is not a good place. We didn't go with that option, fortunately. That was the first two or three weeks and that was a huge challenge.

INTERVIEWER: After the deployment was complete, the sea deployment, the containers that arrived, the vehicles that arrived, most of the equipment had come in, can you describe what the ongoing transportation arrangements were for the re-supply of the Force, re-supply of the Battle Group and how you were involved?

CASE: On the Log side, we were all key players. We all worked as a team. The big challenge was transportation, just getting stuff to where things were going. We did finally get a place to put the sea containers. Lloyd was a good horse trader and he made a deal with the Americans. We got a patch right at the airport, almost right next to the runway. It wasn't hardstand, but it was a place we could put this stuff. If you could picture 230 odd sea containers stacked two high in a big square with a little gate at the end, well we called it Fort Apache and that's what it was. We borrowed a Rough Terrain Container Handler from the Americans. We had these beautiful pieces of kit. 3 CSG, that's the Canadian Support Group in Montreal, still uses these beautiful Container Handlers that we had, but they weren't rough terrain. There were designed for hardstand. We made a deal with the Americans, they gave us a Rough Terrain Handler and we put these two big ones in the port with operators and the Americans used them the whole entire time we were there.

Logistics support was complicated because we moved that far inland. There was only one road, as I was telling you. To get from Mogadishu to Belet Huen using that road typically took one and a half days one way. We had a convoy going every week. So, a day and a half up, they'd stay over night, day and a half back and that went on for almost the entire duration. The Hercules Detachment was pared back from seven aircraft to, I think they went down to three. We had a daily Hercules run that would follow a circuit. It would go Nairobi-Mogadishu, Mogadishu-Belet Huen, maybe a couple hops back there and then back to Nairobi and this happened every day. Now, what made things really challenging initially because the mission had evolved, the scope and the scale of the mission had evolved so quickly, we did not deploy with something that is called a National Support Element. Now, you know what that means.

INTERVIEWER: Well, if you could explain it for…

CASE: No problem. A National Support Element is basically like a theatre logistics organization. So you had a little bit of transportation, supply, movements, medical, that sort of thing, basically to provide the interface between the logistics components that are within a fighting unit and the national system back at home. Well, we didn't have one. There was a manpower cap. It was politically imposed. It's not worth getting into how it happened, but basically we had a manpower cap. Although the Service Support Organization within the Airborne Regiment had been beefed up, it was designed for the Bossasso mission. The thing about Bossasso was they were supposed to be sitting right on an airport about two or three kilometres from a port. Well, in that kind of a scenario you could have a pretty lean, mean logistics organization and get away with it. Well, all of a sudden, these guys are 350 km inland connected by one really beat up road and all the stuff that's in these containers is in Mogadishu and we had no National Support on that. A big challenge that we had, we literally created one from scratch.

INTERVIEWER: And where did the resources come from?

CASE: They came from Canada. Guys here, guys there, individual augmentees. We cobbled it together in Mogadishu and 75-80 guys and it was lean and it was mean.

INTERVIEWER: What about equipment? For example trucks, where did they come from?

CASE: I can't remember if we brought more trucks over or not or we stole some from the Airborne [laughs], I can't remember where all the equipment came from off the top of my head.

INTERVIEWER: Basically, it was very much an *adhoc* organization.

CASE: Oh yeah. As a Log officer, I think it was one of the toughest missions that Canada had been involved with up until that point in time, probably since the Korean War, logistically. We had to jerry-rig everything from scratch from the beginning and that didn't really change all that much all the way through until the deployment. In a lot

of cases when we send guys overseas, you go into a place, you can at least get things locally. The local purchase for us was Kenya, the next country over. Africa is not Europe. It's not North America. There's not a lot of stuff there that you can get that you want. So a lot of stuff that we were looking for had to come from Canada and anyone who was there will tell you we abused the Immediate Operational Requirements. IORs is what it's called. It's a supply term. It's basically a prioritization system for shipping things. We abused it horribly. All the requests that left our HQ went out as an IOR demand because if it went out as an IOR, it would come by air and we could maybe see it in two weeks. There were some things we couldn't do that with, like tires for armoured vehicles. We couldn't do it for that, like large quantities of tires, and we were going through tires at a pretty good clip. Stuff that came by sea took two months.

INTERVIEWER: There was sea re-supply during…

CASE: There was and the way that worked – and again this is jerry-rigging and international cooperation – stuff that would come by sea. In would go half a dozen containers, a dozen containers, whatever would go onto a container ship and it would make its way around and eventually get to Kenya to the port of Mombassa. The Australian Contingent had a ship called HMAS TEBROOKE[?], which was basically a big assault landing ship. It was doing a shuttle run between Mogadishu and Mombassa. Commercial shipping didn't like to go into Mogadishu directly because it was still classified as a war zone and insurance rates as soon as you got within, I forgot how far it was, just went absolutely through the roof. Our stuff was going into Mombassa and the deal we had with the Australians – again, we had this Maritime Logistics Group operating out of—they stayed. They became part of our National Support Element, lucky guys. They thought they were going to go home. The ship left in February. These guys thought they were going to go with it [laughs]. No such luck; they became part of the National Support Element.

END OF SIDE ONE

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum, Oral History Program. Interview with Chris Case. Tape one, side 2. Now you were talking about the National Support Element.

CASE: [Laughs] Yeah, the guys in Nairobi. They would work with the Australians and tee up with them. We were in communication with those guys in Nairobi so they knew what was coming. They would tee up with the Australians. They would go down from Nairobi, down to Mombassa, get a hold of these containers that were coming in by these commercial ships and then arrange to get them loaded onto this Australian warship, which would then go to Mogadishu. I would then arrange to get that ship off loaded, typically using American resources to do that. They would then go over to our little set up at the airport, Fort Apache I think I told you we called it. Then stuff would be taken out of the containers, loaded onto trucks and then it would go by road, or air depending on what it was, up to Belet Huen.

INTERVIEWER: At this Fort Apache, were any containers kept there as stocks or was it simply a transit area?

CASE: Oh yeah. Stuff came and went, but –when these things were all packed, they were packed well before there was any thought of going to the southern part of the country, which is where we all ended up. It was packed for a stereotypical UN mission. I think they even had swimming pool stuff in there [laughs]. They had stuff in there that was never used the entire time, I mean there was all kinds of stuff. There was also stuff, big, bulky stuff that they did need. So we had a supply detachment that worked out of there. They had a huge job just to try and figure out, so what have we got here. In fact, there was a team sent over from Canada. I think those guys stayed too. Once we got a hold of people, we didn't like letting them go [laughs]. You can appreciate that because we were so starved for people just to try and make this thing happen.

But there was a team that came over and their job was to an inventory of what all we had in all these containers. And I remember talking to the warrant officer who was doing that and he was saying there was stuff that's never going to be used. There was nothing that anybody could do about it. There's stuff coming and going. There's stuff coming in all the time. We tried to stockpile where it made sense in Belet Huen. We had stocked piled rations and water.

One thing I should point out is that the feeding arrangements for this mission were very different from most of them. I remembering sitting in a meeting in Kingston before I left and there was a lot of discussion about how feeding was going to be done. At that time, I think I remember that the decision initially would be we would use individual ration packs, individual meal packs they call them. I guess I'm dating myself. I was around when they use to be called something else. Hard Rations. You know, boil the bag. If you have ever seen Magic Pantry in the store well, that was it. The original plan was to eat that, was to go with that. Then, there were cooks that were part of the contingent. There were kitchen trailers that were coming over, so the plan was to go to feeding like you would do here out of a field kitchen. Well, that changed. The environment there was a really dirty one. The flies carried, I think, probably every disease known to man, then a few. Certainly in Mogadishu where we were—did you ever see the movie Platoon? Do you remember the movie Platoon?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

CASE: OK. Well, there's a point in time where the lead character gets in trouble so he has to work with the other guys to clean out the latrines. Remember those half cut 45-gallon drums with the handles that they hauled out from underneath the latrines and then they poured diesel fuel and lit it. Well, that's what we did. I think that's what the whole city did because between about 10 and 12 every day there was this really interesting smell. I've got pictures here of just that, of the toilets that we had. We were on IMPs. We were on ration packs for six months. The kitchen trailers were damaged on the ship on the way over. An 18,000-tanker trailer broke loose in the midst of a storm. North

Atlantic, December, a storm, go figure. It broke loose and just acted like a battering ram. It took out just about every kitchen trailer that was coming.

So we were on IMPs. We tried to stock IMPs up there. Needless to say, food became a real source of interest and concern to everyone. Lots of horse trading going back and forth. The Americans loved our IMPs. For our part, American tray rations were a big hit for a while and then the novelty wore off. We tried to stock pile all this stuff in Belet Huen. Well, there's a limit to what you can do. We had a couple of delays getting stuff from Canada. For about a week there we weren't sure just how we were going to resolve it, but eventually we were able to buy some stuff from the Americans.

Now, you're looking at me and I know no one else can see this, but I am about 5'8''-5'9'', I weight about 150 odd pounds. I lost a trouser size in about 2 months. We all did. I can still remember watching this fly guy who worked next to me. I can still remember the IOR demand he put in for 1,500 pairs of suspenders [laughs] because everyone was losing weight.

INTERVIEWER: To talk about the physical aspects of your HQ, you moved shortly after you arrived from the ship to the US Embassy compound. Could you describe the HQ there?

CASE: Oh, yeah. Completely unlike anything most people would experience here. The Embassy compound there is a fairly big place. We ended up occupying what use to be the motor pool, a few buildings, that kind of a thing. When we got there – and you have to appreciate what happened – we were there in January of '93. The Americans had abandoned the place in 1990. For the next two years, squatters basically took over the whole compound. Well, they got punted out when the Americans came back. They all left. The buildings that we were occupying, one of the first things the guys had to do, a lot of the guys that were aboard PRESERVER would volunteer to come ashore to help do work. They would help put a roof on over the area where a lot of the guys were sleeping. The area where we ended up eating, we called it the atrium, it was kind of an outdoor covered-over thing. Well, there was about half a foot of camel and donkey poop in there because they had used this whole area as a stable. We got that cleaned out. In the buildings themselves, you could see where the copper piping had been because the locals had chiselled it out from the walls. So it was pretty austere.

A six-foot folding table is what I worked off of. I had a 386 laptop, which in 1993 was state of the art [laughs]. The Division HQ was really designed to command a division of troops in the field and they had these really, really nice ISO containers that were built up inside as offices, like for their HQ, and they were air-conditioned. These guys would work during the day in these air-conditioned ISO containers, the Ops guys did. Us Loggies, we worked in 45-degree heat [laughs], sweating our guts out, working off a six-foot folding table. It was pretty austere.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of communications did you have?

CASE: Let's see. We had telephone conversations, telephone coms; INMAR SAT and INTEL SAT we used a fair bit. Now guys going overseas today, especially for things like calling home to talk to mother—in those days there was no such thing as, I mean, e-mail was just coming on board – wasn't readily available. I think the first time I had every heard of e-mail was there. We had that capability. Within the theatre, it was OK. We had telephone communications to Nairobi, with telephone comms back to Canada.

INTERVIEWER: But as you say, very little e-mail…

CASE: Oh, heck no. I mean from a personal support side, mail is everything to us. A lot of the wives would send care packages, they all did. My wife did, everybody did. And if you got care packages, you shared. Everybody shared with each other because if you didn't that was the one sure way to guarantee you wouldn't…

INTERVIEWER: Were there any other sort of official amenities through CANEX or any of that sort of thing?

CASE: Well, let's see. There was some books, some old newspapers that would come in by air. We were allowed two beers per man per day and that was rigidly enforced in Mogadishu, very, very tightly controlled. Less so in Belet Huen, but in Mogadishu they took your name and anyone who tried to get a third beer would be told by the bartender, "No, sorry you had your two." It was pretty tight. But that was it, we were working 14-15 hour days, plus, seven days a week.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe your daily personal routine?

CASE: Usually up around 6:30-7 o'clock. Breakfast was an IMP. I was able to avoid IMPs for about two or three years after coming back. So sick of it. I think there were six or seven menus for breakfast, lunch and supper, each. You would think that would be OK, but it got really boring, really repetitive, really, really quick. I would start working around quarter after seven, seven-thirty. Some of the guys would go out and go for a run. We had a gym there. I had almost forgotten about that. We had a gym set up. There were weights and everything and a bunch of guys did that. Some guys went running. I would go up stairs and just basically suntan, put on a whole bunch of suntan lotion and just lie down for about an hour or so between about noon and 1:30-2:00, the height of the day. I understand where the whole concept of a siesta comes from in Spain because it was just brutal. You felt as limp as a wet noodle, it really did. It just drained you, absolutely draining. You'd work 'til about, again depending on what you were doing, it wasn't uncommon to work until 9:30-10:00 at night and you would do that seven days a week.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of quarters for sleeping did you have?

CASE: Again, we were at the embassy, in our little area. Not a whole lot of ventilation. We had a fan in the room that I was in. There were rooms, but it's really, really tough to compare that with anything here. I have got pictures of it. It was really basic. I had a

camp cot. We all had camp cots. The latrine facilities I told you about. We had showers, which was good. The troops lived in a great big dormitory kind of a thing, which we had put a roof on. We were told it didn't rain there for three or four months. Well, I think it was the5th or 6th of January and it just poured [laughs]. Absolutely poured and these guys just got soaked. Col. Labbé said, "Right, the roof goes up." And I remember being up there myself with a drill and all this corrugated iron doing roofing; and you did that. If there was nothing going on, there would be two or three guys, and let's go do some roofing, and go up with the Navy guys.

INTERVIEWER: Now, in the course of your duties, you had to leave the compound quite frequently...

CASE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: …most days, at least to go to the airport?

CASE: Yes. You went by vehicle, always at least three or four in the vehicle at any given time in the back. There's a main road that goes through town and it goes past the Embassy compound, goes through the market down to what we called the K4 traffic circle, big traffic circle. It was where most of the correspondents did their broadcasts from. It would carry on, it would go past the airport, past the port and into an area we called the green zone, which was where two principal rivals clans, where their territories kind of met. You've seen pictures of Beirut, Berlin; Beirut in the early '80's, Berlin in '45, exactly like that. You would go through town. You really didn't know from one day to the next what was going to happen. In most cases it wasn't a problem, but sometimes there would be rocks. You didn't know if they were going to smile at you or shoot at you sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you travel out of Mogadishu often to Belet Huen, for example, or to Nairobi?

CASE: Well, Nairobi was initially our rest and relaxation centre. The first one, believe it or not, was HMCS PRESERVER. You weren't on the ground, you were actually on the ship. That was our first R&R centre. People were allowed to do an R&R trip every forty days, you had travel days, but you would be gone three days kind of a thing.

Belet Huen fairly frequently at least minimum every other week. I led a convoy to Belet Huen just to see what the guys in the National Support Element were doing. I took a convoy up and unbelievable. You're travelling at 25 km an hour, absolutely unbelievable, very flat, low scrub, desert kind of a thing. The convoy I led had a bunch of vehicles from the International Red Cross. We escorted them up. We had a convoy escort as well from the Defence and Security Platoon. We never sent convoys out without an escort because you just didn't know what was going to happen. There's always the potential that you might run into trouble. I remember we stopped because the drivers were all Muslims so they needed to do prayers, so we stopped for lunch. I remember getting on top of this ten-ton truck and I got on the roof of the cab and started

looking around, nothing around for miles. Fifteen-twenty minutes later, people start coming out of the woodwork. I don't know where the heck they came from and they were begging for food. I got pictures of that, absolutely wild. So I was in Belet Huen a few times.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever feel concerned for your personal security while you were there?

CASE: Once. Once. The 26th of January. I remember because it was the first time I got mail from my wife. I started to feel pretty sorry for myself up until that point in time because I had been away from home for a month and apart from a couple of telephone calls I had no communication with her. I had no idea what was going on with our newborn. I got four pieces of mail that day. It was about 6:30 and a whole bunch of shooting started. As it turned out later, there was nothing to worry about, but I didn't know that at the time. It was pretty loud. I was wearing running shoes, a pair of gym shorts, I had a blue t-shirt and I had a gun on my hip [laughs]. I had 26 rounds. I was crouched down behind a wall. I was in a concrete building…

INTERVIEWER: This was in the compound?

CASE: …Oh yeah. The US Embassy compound was this little island in the middle of a million people where virtually everyone had guns. Mogadishu was and is Dodge City and Tombstone all rolled up into one. Everybody had weapons. I remember crouching down behind this little concrete wall inside this building. I'm in a concrete building so the sound is echoing all over the place and it sounded to me like it was coming from more than one direction. I thought, "My God, they're scaling the walls." That was the first thought I had. "Holy crap, this is…" and it hits you. The first time you hear shots fired in anger – this wasn't the first time for me, I had heard them before, but it hits you. This isn't a movie, this isn't an exercise, it's real. As it turns out, we found out later, there was an accidental discharge. Someone was nervous and that sparked a whole bunch of shooting. As it turned out, there was nothing to worry about. I didn't know that at the time. So yeah, for a couple minutes there I was a bit worried about what was going to happen. Had no idea. With a pistol you can't do much.

INTERVIEWER: In terms of Command and Control, who did you deal with at a higher level and what were some of your relationships with some of the other forces that were in Somalia at the time?

CASE: As far as Command and Control goes, we dealt directly with NDHQ in Ottawa. Every day I would get on the phone and talk to a Duty Officer in the Movement Ops Centre and we would cover a variety of issues. We would compare notes. They would give me an idea what was due to come by air and what was coming by sea. We would cover other miscellaneous issues. Another officer in HQ was calling the J-4 Logistics side so we would often compare notes to make sure that what the log guys had been talking about, us movers knew so that we didn't drop any balls. That was primarily who I dealt with.

Within the theatre there was the overall HQ run by the Americans. It was called UNITAF. I didn't have a whole lot of dealings with them *per se*. Once we got in there and got set up, I didn't have a whole lot of dealings with them. There were others that did, but I certainly didn't.

As far as cooperation with other countries went, we got a lot of support throughout the mission from the US. Particularly things like heavy lift, container handlers. Our convoys every week to Belet Huen typically included three or four 18-wheeler low-bed tractor-trailer rigs that the Americans provided because we just didn't have them. We just didn't have them in theatre. For the most part, we tried to operate as self-sufficient as we could as a contingent, which I know from talking to several Americans, I think they appreciated that. There were 33-34 countries that were there and some of these countries; I saw some of these guys. Their soldiers showed up almost quite literary with three days worth of rations and the clothes on their backs and that was about it. On day three, they were knocking on the door of the Americans saying, "Can you please provide up with this, this, this and this."

We cooperated with the Australians, I think I mentioned before, on the shipping side. The other county we dealt with was the Italians. They ran the Humanitarian Relief Sector that was almost directly in between the Belet Huen area, which Canada ran, and Mogadishu. When we ran convoys, our guys would stay overnight with the Italians. We had a Canadian Liaison Officer, who actually was a friend of mine, an Italian-speaking officer who stayed and lived with the Italians for the better part of six months. He was our LO, both on the Operations side and the Logistics side. We would call him up and say, "OK Rob, here's what's going on, here's what we need" and those were primarily the countries we dealt with.

Most of the rest of them—hang on, I just remembered the Turks. I never dealt with the Turks, but what was kind of funny was there was a Turkish Contingent and I think there were a few Greeks there as well. It was quite funny because towards the later part of the tour, at the back end of the compound, the Canadian and the Turks, side by side, were guarding the rear gate of the US Embassy Compound. I always thought it was funny because not too far away in Cyprus Canadian troops were separating Greeks and Turks [laughs] from killing each other. I remember thinking, this just figures. Yeah, those are the countries I dealt with.

INTERVIEWER: So you stayed in Somalia for the full tour of six months?

CASE: I was on the last flight out.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe the re-deployment because the force was closed down [inaudible] and can you describe that process?

CASE: Well, to start with, it's probably important to note the fact that when we deployed we had no return date and initially we were told nothing. We were going there maybe

two or three months. We're not sure, you're going. That was OK for a while. It became a morale issue, a big one, not only for the families at home, but for us as well because we would be talking to our wives or our families: "So when you coming home?" "Um…not sure." It wasn't until May, and it was largely driven by logistics requirements believe it or not, we passed the message onto Ottawa that: "Hey, look it, if you want to do a rotation, that's fine. If you want to re-deploy us then here's how much time that we need from start to finish to do that." So it was about the middle of May after we had been there for a good five months or so that we were told we were coming home.

The National Support Element was almost doubled in size for the re-deployment. It rose from a strength of about 75-80 guys to about 150. For the longest time it was a classic administrative re-deployment. We were able to get a hold of an area—there were two ports in Mogadishu, the new port you saw on the news and that's where the ships went in, and there was an old disused port which had a fair bit of hardstand there. The Americans had been using that to clean vehicles and that sort of a thing prior to loading them on ships and sending them home. So we arranged with them to do the same sort of thing. The National Support Element was set up in there and we were washing vehicles and we had all theses containers of stuff to go and stuff was going in there. It was like watching an operation here in Canada. Everything in the containers being properly blocked and braced, manifests for each container, detailed manifests done up in triplicate, everything was going great until the first week of June.

One day the city exploded, it just absolutely erupted in violence. By the end of that day, the Pakistani Battalion in town had sustained about 100 casualties. Twenty-three or four of them had been killed. Our guys, some of our guys had been ambushed just going to refill an 18,000-tanker trailer of water and they drove through an ambush. The corporal who was leading the detail was a guy that I knew and he was a white as a sheet. You could see the bullet holes in the trailer and they were lucky as hell because whoever fired, if they had fired maybe a fraction of a second earlier, the rounds would have been in the cab and one of our guys would have been either seriously hurt or killed. Well, that changed everything.

The United Nations by this time was running the show. The coalition had shut down in May. There was a formal change in command. The UN was now running it. There was still a fair number of senior American officers involved in the UN HQ and we got the word that they were going to be bringing in Spectre Gun ships. These are C130 aircraft loaded with, I think, 105 mm gun. This thing is a flying gun ship and they were going to bring these things in and they were going to take out various locations in the city. We were told: you have one week to get out of that old port and hunker down in the new port because after that all hell's going to break loose.

Well, we were half way through our loading. It had taken us three weeks to load half the containers. So the rest of the re-deployment? It was open the container door and stuff just got tossed in. Blocking and bracing? None of that, just everything got huffed in there and you slam the door and go OK, next. And that's what it was like. So when all

the stuff got back to Canada, they could tell when stuff had been loaded just by opening the door and there were a few creepy-crawlies that got into some of the containers.

It was kind of what we expected and, sure enough, that week later all hell did break loose. Every night for the last week that I was there, every night these planes—they would start around midnight-12:30 and my last night in theatre. Case luck, I drew Duty Officer in the Command Post at midnight, my last night there. I remember standing there with a cup of coffee with a signaller. We were just standing outside the Command Post. We were at the airport by this time. We had closed out of the Embassy compound and I'm watching the horizon. You couldn't see anything. You couldn't see them fire or anything like that, but you could see the little orange glow on the horizon and you could hear the sounds of the explosions.

They got the ships in, loading the ships. Half way through the loading an RPG7 arrives, a Rocket Propelled Grenade. An RPG7 round landed in the water right between the two ships. The ships captains wanted to take off right then and there. We prevailed upon them to stay and finish the loading. Some of the loading party came under small arms fire every once and a while. The way the port was set up, it was a u-shaped jetty so you got the ocean on the one side. On the other side you got this great big hill and there were all these buildings at the top of the hill. The guys would get in there and take pot shots at the guys trying to load the ships. We came under mortar fire at the airport, just once, three or four rounds that kind of a thing. So the re-deployment was almost as exciting as getting there. The last flight left Nairobi on the 22nd of June and I was on it.

INTERVIEWER: So did you go back as you came, by commercial air from Nairobi?

CASE: Yup.

INTERVIEWER: And what about—most of the Contingent went back by Hercules and…

CASE: No. It was contracted airlift all the way through Skylink, which is a contracting company out of Toronto. A lot of flights left from Mogadishu…

INTERVIEWER: Direct back to Canada?

CASE: …direct back to Canada. The reason the last one left from Nairobi was we finished off the ship loading, we moved what was left of the Rear Party over to Nairobi and then an airplane came in there and they picked us all up and a way we went. And that was it.

INTERVIEWER: What about when you returned to Canada? Were there any debriefings or anything of that sort? What was your reception when you returned home?

CASE: Well, by the time I got to Kingston it was around 11:30-12:00 at night and my family wasn't due to show up until the next day. A friend of mine met me there and I

went back to an empty house and the next day got into a car and drove up to the local airport and, if I remember rightly, and picked up my wife and daughter [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: You met them?

CASE: I met them just like I sent them off [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: Of course, while you were in Somalia there were incidents in Belet Huen, the murder of Sidane Arone and so forth. Do you have reflections on that or how it was seen at the time?

CASE: Well, I actually arrived in Belet Huen the day after that happened. Remember that convoy I was telling you about? The night I stayed over with the Italians was the night that Sidane Arone was killed. We got into Belet Huen the next day. It was the early afternoon and I didn't know anything about it at all. A friend of mine, he was the Logistics Officer of a helicopter flight which had been deployed from Canada in the early part of March to give the Airborne Regiment a greater capability. He was the one who told me about it. Their camp set up was right next to Two Commando's and he told me about it. There wasn't a lot he knew about it either. More came out in the following days and I think my reaction at the time – I don't think it's changed a whole lot. At first I couldn't believe it and then I started hearing more. I talked to some people who were, who then and since then, who actually knew some of the people who were involved.

You know, we were heroes before we left. Like, before that day we were heroes. I come from a small town in southern Ontario, a place called Woodstock. The local paper came to interview my parents and the parents of another guy, a trooper in the Airborne Regiment, about us going to Somalia. Paper, big write up, 'Two local boys made good'. The press coverage up until, I think it was the 16th of March when he was killed, 15th or 16th, the press coverage was uniformly positive, glowing. We in the mission could do nothing wrong. After that, we couldn't do a damn thing right and it stayed like that for four years. I was there when the Board of Inquiry came over. They didn't interview me, there was no need to. I got a pretty fair idea how American soldiers felt when they came home from Vietnam. I really do because that next four years – it was hard not to get bitter because the media, the politicians were so focused on that one incident and it was one thing that happened in six months.

The local elders told the Canadian High Commissioner from Kenya – she went to visit them after we had gone. And the local elders in Belet Huen told her staff that the Canadians had done more for the people of Belet Huen in six months than any Somalian regime had done in the previous 30 years. I mean, schools, roads, Belet Huen was one of the safest places to be really any where in the country. Mogadishu, in comparison, was far more volatile. It was not uncommon – I read the Sitreps that we sent back to Canada every day. It was not uncommon to read about kids being killed with a grenade. They had found a live grenade that, of course, the pin eventually got yanked out or whatever, and it exploded and kids died. I read it often enough that it wasn't uncommon.

INTERVIEWER: In Mogadishu?

CASE: In Mogadishu. Drive-by shooting happened in Mogadishu. A friend of mine, he was the commander of the National Support Unit, had a 10-year old kid point a gun at him. He was going through the market about 6:30 in the morning one day and he just happened to look behind him and there was this kid, with a gun, pointing it at him, a handgun. Now Mohammad Ideed, he was one of the clan leaders. We learned through the intelligence network that his folks were giving kids guns, fake ones, and saying, "Go point them at this guy over here," knowing what the rules of engagement were. This kid had the drop on him. Nothing happened, the kid ran away. He was just so incredibly lucky. But Mogadishu was like that. You just didn't know sometimes what was going to happen. Belet Huen on the other hand, I never felt scared there at all, never, never. We got our medals four years after the fact. These were theatre medals, which you probably have yourself –one for Cyprus for having been there. We were treated like lepers, baby killers. Not quite an exact replay of the post Vietnam, but awfully darn close to it. It wasn't until the floods in '97 that things started to turn around.

INTERVIEW: This would be the Canadian public?

CASE: Yeah. Oh yeah, big time, big time. And you know what? I was proud to be there, I was proud to be there. I went and did something. We all did. There were something like 1,300 or so Canadians that served there and a vast majority of them did a really, really outstanding job under conditions that were definitely not easy.

The Somalies are a tough people. It's a warrior's society. I will say this, it was sometimes hard not to become jaded a bit. A quick example, if I can give you a quick example of this, there was a river that went through Belet Huen, one bridge. And everything used it, people, camels, donkeys, armoured vehicles. We decided we would build the town a footbridge so the people could use the footbridge and not get run over by us. Materials were flown in from Nairobi. The engineers built this bridge; there was a ceremonial opening. Two hours later a crowd assembled and everything that wasn't bolted down and a lot of stuff that was, within two hours, it was gone. It scattered to the four winds. A lot of the guys that had worked on that bridge kind of looked at that and went 'hmm.' I didn't want to go to the War Museum because of that picture of Clayton Matchee that was in the front. I swore to boycott until that picture left. For me, it's a very personal thing. I can't speak for everyone there, but I suspect that's probably the case for a lot of us. The aftermath was far worst. Everything that happened after that was far worst. It was extremely demoralizing.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum, Oral History Program, interview with Chris Case. Tape two, side one. Let's now turn to your time in Bosnia. Could you describe the events leading up to your selection for this deployment?

CASE: Well, it was a bit different this time. When the Dayton Peace Accord was signed that was really the start of the whole thing. We received a warning order in Pettawawa. I was the G-4 Transportation, basically the Transportation and Movement Staff Officer in the Brigade HQ in 2 Brigade in Pettawawa. As I recall, the brigade received a warning order that Canada was going to be providing a contingent to this new NATO Implementation Force which was going to go in and separate the warring parties in Bosnia. We went through a bunch of iterations. The one constant throughout was that Canada was going to be providing a Brigade HQ. So that basically meant that just about everybody in 2 Brigade HQ, of which I was a part, was tagged to go. It was pretty much a matter of, you're part of the unit, you're going. It was different from Somalia where, yeah I was part of the HQ, but not everyone in the HQ went. In this case it was pretty much everyone and when we left, virtually every Staff Officer, including the Commander, was replaced by other stand ins who came from various parts of the base in Pettawawa. It was pretty much a matter of, you're gone.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of operational briefings did you receive prior to deployment?

CASE: Well, we got a little more this time, if I remember rightly, again this was about 10 years ago. I was fairly busy because my job was to organize the deployment of the Canadian Contingent from Canada over there. Comparatively speaking, I was a heck of a lot busier than I was when I went to Somalia. I didn't get involved in that really when I did the Somalia deployment. There were briefings. I remember sitting in the conference room and we went through a bunch of scenarios, people getting stopped at checkpoints and that sort of a thing. We'd already been pretty much primed to go to that part of the world anyways. The summer of '95 there was a considerate amount of turmoil going on in Bosnia. And NATO at that time was preparing a contingency plan to go in, in force and basically fight its way through to Srebrenica. Rescue a whole bunch of people who were in danger of being killed and then get them all back to the coast and then on to ferries and away we went kind of a thing. The brigade as a whole had been cranked up to do something like that for several months. We had done a major brigade exercise in Gagetown from the tail end of August to about the middle of September. So everyone was pretty much cranked up to go. There wasn't a whole lot of additional training that we needed to go and do something like this. Once we confirmation of the organization, we got to work and away we went.

INTERVIEWER: Well, can you describe your part in the deployment planning and the execution?

CASE: My job was to get what was in Canada from Canada to Bosnia by air and by sea. Now the Canadian Contingent came largely from Petawawa. There was going to be an independent Rifle Company group coming out of 2RCR in Gagetown. The stuff that was going by air was all going to go out of Trenton. So that was the advance party people with their vehicles. The reconnaissance party, the main body personnel would all fly out of Trenton. Main body vehicles and freight and that sort of a thing was going to go out by ship out of Montreal. So what I had to do at my level as the Brigade Officer, I was

liasing with three different area HQ. The one in Toronto, which looks after the Central Area, the one in Montreal, Sector de Québec and also Atlantic Area because that's what 2RCR came under. I was also dealing with National Defence HQ, the J-4 Movement staff and Army HQ in Montreal as well because, obviously, the brigade comes under the Army and at that time Army HQ still existed. A lot of co-ordination, it took about a month-month and a half to get everything over there.

So that was my job, shepherding everything out the door and I was on the last flight to go over to Bosnia. That was pretty much what I did. Planning aircraft loads, organizing the movement of vehicles from Pettawaw to Montreal, movement of vehicles from Pettawawa to Trenton, all that kind of stuff. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the Service Battalion in the Brigade, I worked very closely with them as well because they actually provided the people who ran a lot of these things, the ship loading party and so on.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe the makeup of the force that was deployed?

CASE: It was a unique organization. We staff checked 16 options. The Minister of Defence came on a Tuesday at 5:30 and announced the 17th, which was actually when we went, so that created a little bit of angst for the Ops planers. They had to burn the midnight oil that night to re-jig things. The heart of it was the Brigade HQ and the Signals Squadron – because Canada was given the job of running a Multinational Brigade Group, which ultimately consisted of, not just the Canadians, but also a British Battle Group – an Infantry Battle Group that is – and a Czech Infantry Battle Group. So there was the Canadian Brigade HQ with a Signals Squadron. There was an independent Rifle Company which came out of Gagetown. There was an Engineer Squadron which was based on 2 Combat Engineer Regiment.

This time we have what we called the Engineer surge. And this was a bunch of extra engineers that came in to help build camps because we were roto zero. We had to build the camp that we were going to occupy, so we had a bunch of engineers. There was a medical component based on stuff that came from 2 Field Ambulance in Pettawawa, but there were individual agmentees that came from all across the country and a National Support Element of about 240 people. The Canadian Contingent all totalled was about 2000. So you can see it was a huge difference between 1996 when we deployed to Bosnia with a big NSE, as opposed to Somalia three years earlier we deployed with no NSE. We had to build one once we got there. So it was a huge difference in that regard.

INTERVIEWER: But in terms of infantry, you only had one Rifle Company?

CASE: One Rifle Company that came from us. Did I mention the MP Platoon? I don't think I did. There was about 40-50 man MP Platoon as well. Canada provided a lot of, like, the brigade level troops. The actual fighting echelon, Canada provided a Rifle Company and Britain and Czechoslovakia each provide a battle group. Those were really the manoeuvre elements in this multi-national brigade.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe how you arrived in theatre and what your initial impressions were?

CASE: [Laughs] Well, I arrived on the last flight so the job I had done in Somalia of receiving stuff and figuring how to deal with that, I didn't have to worry about that. Officers in the NSE, the 2 Service Battalion guys, they dealt with all sort of reception thing. So really, once everything was out the door from Montreal and Trenton I became a passenger.

I hadn't been to that part of Europe before, hadn't spent much time in Europe at all really. Very different from Africa, of course. You drive through villages that had been badly damaged, you would see houses that were destroyed and in that regard not really a whole lot of difference between some of the things I saw when I was in Somalia. But again, different location, people are very different. When I got to the camp people were living in ISO trailers, so right away there's a huge difference in terms of comfort.

INTERVIEWER: These were trailer that had been modified for…

CASE: …for sleeping accommodations, yeah…

INTERVIEWER: …and also for office accommodations as well?

CASE: Well, not so much for office accommodations. These things were owned by the UN, an UNPROFOR, a UN Protection Force Contingent had been using them. There were bunk beds with actual mattresses. Camp cot weren't required. Some of them had heat, most of them had heat. We were working in a building right next to a cement factory. I was working in a place called Coralici.

INTERVIEWER: Can you spell that?

CASE: C-O-R-A-L-I-C-I [spells word]. We were in the Bihac Pocket area; Bihac is spelt B-I-H-A-C [spells word]. Northwestern part of Bosnia.

INTERVIEWER: Was this a previous UNPROFOR camp, then?

CASE: Yeah, if I remember rightly, I think the Bangladeshis had been in there. I heard stories after I got there that they had to condemn and burn a few of these trailers because I guess some of the Bangladeshis soldiers—maybe it's a cultural thing I don't know, but they had sawed out holes to use as latrines inside these sleeping trailers [laughs] so some of them had to be destroyed. Some of these ISO trailers were set up as washrooms, so you actually had a flush toilet; you had a sink with running water. Completely different from Somalia where to wash in the morning, to shave, you had your issued metal washbasin and there was a jerry can and you poured water into it. Completely different, much more civilized.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe the operational role of the Multinational Brigade that you were in and particularly what was the Canadian role?

CASE: The brigade as a whole, lot of patrolling. You know the story of what happened in Bosnia. All three ethnic groups, the Muslims, the Croats, the Serbs, did equally nasty things to each other or to their own people as a tool to manipulate the media. A lot of patrolling, providing presence. On the Canadian side, again the manoeuvre element, we didn't have that much. They did their fair share. The engineers initially were involved in camp construction. They also got involved in minefield clearance and that sort of a thing. The Military Police did what military police do anywhere. We had a lot of accidents. We had a ton of vehicle accidents. From the time I got there to the time I left we had 106 accidents. We were having accidents three or four times a day in the wintertime on the roads.

INTERVIEWER: Chiefly due to the condition of the roads or the weather conditions or…?

CASE: And drivers, and the drivers, all three. We were in a mountainous area so lots of switchbacks. The local drivers, some of them just drive like lunatics. You'd see them in these little Volkswagen Golfs or Rabbits and just insane. And a lot of our guys were driving way too fast for the conditions. They were told several times to slow down and, like I said, some days we would have three, four, five accidents.

INTERVIEWER: Your duties as G-4 Transportation once you had got there, the deployment had been done, what would your typical day or typical duties involve?

CASE: Well, by comparison, my workload was a whole lot less because we had a National Support Element. There was no jerry rigging for us there like there was in Somalia. We had 240-odd guys in the NSE. So as far as co-ordinating replenishment and all the rest of that kind of stuff, I wasn't really involved in that because we had a section of Traffic Techs. They were basically movement specialists. They were dealing with that. They were dealing with the depots and movements organization back in Canada, so all that kind of stuff that I did, me, myself and I, the three of us in Somalia, I was a one-man band in Somalia. It was a lot easier. I spent a lot of time dealing with vehicle accidents, not surprisingly.

INTERVIEWER: Did the National Support Element provide support just to the Canadians or to the others in the Brigade as well as the second line support?

CASE: It was second line. It was a combination of what would be second line, formation support, as well as theatre support for the Canadian Contingent. They were doing trips down to the port of Split, which is in Croatia, to pick some stuff up that would come in by container. It would come in through Split or Rijeka more frequently and they would go down there and pick that up and bring it back by road. Roads were a lot better too, lots more of them, more or less maintained. With the exception of the local drivers they were pretty safe to drive on.

INTERVIEWER: What about the equipment that the Canadian Contingent had? Did you think it was adequate for the job and how did it compare to the equipment that some of the other forces may have had?

CASE: My own impression was that it was pretty comparable. As far as adequate goes, I think it was. One of the vehicle types that we had there was called an LSVW, Light Support Vehicle Wheeled. I don't know many soldiers that like them anyways, but it really had nothing to do with the mission. These were the ones we already had. The braking system on them is terrible. When you apply the brakes it sounds like you're driving a garbage truck. You can hear it for miles. Other than that, it seemed to be OK.

I do remember, I seem to recall there was a team of maintainers that came over. We were up-armouring these vehicles. Mines were a big issue in Bosnia, more so than in Somalia. Although in Somalia we did have vehicles that did strike anti-tank mines – armoured vehicles primarily and none of their guys were seriously injured. They were shaken up a bit. In Bosnia mines were literally everywhere. Not so much on the main roads. Nobody really wanted to take much of a chance. So I seem to recall that there was a team that came over and they were up armouring these things. I seem to recall they were installing air-conditioning systems into these things as well. Most of the vehicles don't come equipped with air-conditioning. Those are called windows [laughs], but with these things here and the armouring, you couldn't lower the windows so they had to have some sort of ventilation. I think, for the most part, they were OK. The bigger vehicles on some of these roads, the way the switchbacks are designed, the winter conditions especially were probably a bit tougher for the drivers to deal with, especially some of the bigger, heavier vehicles.

INTERVIEWER: Now was the Canadian Contingent all deployed in the same camp or were there various locations in the sector?

CASE: Yeah, there were three camps; the HQ, the medics and the MPs were at Coralici, which is where I worked. The Rifle Company and the Engineer Squadron were at a place called Kluj.

INTERVIEWER: Can you spell that?

CASE: K-L-U-J [spells word], I think. I think that's how it's spelled. That was about an hour away, or so. It was in the southern part of the Canadian sector. The National Support Element was in a town called Velika Kladusa, V-E-L-I-K-A K-L-A-D-U-S-A [spells word], Velika Kladusa. That's where they were. There were three Canadian camps. We called it VK for short. They were about half hour, 45 minutes away. We were spread out a fair bit. The Brits, where were the Brits? I can't recall where the Brits were, but the Czechs were more in the Serb area of our area of operations. They were more in a predominately Serb area. Where we were, it was mostly Muslims.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe the operations that took place while you were there?

CASE: I sat in on the commander's daily prayers every morning. Pretty routine, really. There were occasions when there were problems between the ethnic groups. Emotions were really raw there. The hatred was always there. You could feel it. The air was almost thick with it. People that don't forget anything, events that happened 300 years ago to people in that part of the world. As far as they're concerned, that happened yesterday. Completely different than how we look at, I guess, history. I know for me, I was really surprised. I guess naively thought that Europeans would think like North Americans. I guess that's what I thought before I went over there. In many regards, Somalia was actually easier, I suppose, as horrible as that may sound. I can understand what was going on in Somalia because it was based on clan membership. The country of Somalia didn't figure all that greatly in the minds of most people. It was what clan you belonged to. In Bosnia, well, the former Yugoslavia really, Tito is what held it all together. After he left, it just fell apart.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of encounters did you have with Bosnians from one side or the other while you were there?

CASE: Primarily with people who were working for us on the camp, some of the translators, that sort of a thing. Not a whole lot of direct contact, really, other than that. Again, you read the Sitreps, you talk to people. We had a fairly healthy Civil Military Cooperation team over there, far bigger than what we had in Somalia, and they were out all the time working with people and that sort of a thing.

I just remembered one thing, one of the big things on the operational side was rounding up weapons, establishing what we called cantonment sites for weapons. All kinds of stuff, everything from tanks, to artillery, to mortars, well, you name it. That was initially a problem and, in some regards, Bosnia is kind of like Somalia, a lot of people had guns. When I first got there, I think it was the first or second night, I was in my ISO trailer and a whole bunch of gunfire erupted. Of course, having been in Somalia, I thought, "What's going on here?" And somebody said, "Oh, don't worry, it's just a wedding." [Laughs], celebratory fire, it's a novel concept [interviewer laughs]. By comparison to Somalia, it was a lot different. It was a lot calmer. Everything was calmer. I never once felt scared there, never once.

INTERVIEWER: Did you travel outside of your HQ often?

CASE: Oh, all the time, yeah. Over to the National Support Element a lot. Down to Kluj. We called it 'Camp Maple Leaf', where the engineers were. I was down there probably about a dozen times. In fact, we were running outside the camp for PT. You could never do this in Mogadishu. You wouldn't dare. It was just too dangerous to go outside of that secure area on foot. Initially, where we were set up, where I was, right across the road there was a gravel pit and when I got there, for people who wanted to go out for a run, there were set times during the day and an infantry section would park an armoured personnel carrier for security and you could run up and down the quarry. That was PT. Then there were some areas that were cleared to go running and you stayed on

the path. When they say, “Don’t walk on the grass.” in Bosnia, it’s for a good reason. The mines over here, over there. People would booby-trap their houses to prevent people from breaking in. You sort of take that very seriously. There were running paths. I was out of the camp almost every day. I would go for a run in the afternoon. You know my boss and I or a couple of friends of mine and we would be out running along the road. Never ever, ever do that in Mogadishu.

INTERVIEWER: Now, in your particular job, what were some of your biggest concerns and what were the problems to be worked on?

CASE: Well, once we got there, there was some equipment that had to be sent home about half way through the tour. I got there at the tail end of January and we left about the middle of July. So the Engineer surge team that we had there, we had to get them and their stuff home and we sent that back about the middle of March. I had to plan that. After that, the next big thing was the rotation. Five Brigade, Cinqième Brigades, from Valcartier, they replaced us, man for man, in July. So there was a rotation that had to occur. My job was to coordinate the flights and all the preparations you have to go through to get people out. All the departure assistance groups, turning in of kit and a whole bunch of other stuff, I was involved in all of that.

INTERVIEWER: The day-to-day transportation was really the job of the National Support Element?

CASE: Boring. For me, personally, boring as heck. It was much different than Bosnia because we had all the stuff we should have had. All the stuff we should have had in Somalia and didn’t, we actually had there and then some. The NSE was huge.

INTERVIEWER: This was a well-planned operation, then, with the adequate equipment and adequate personnel to do the job that you were called on to do? Is this correct?

CASE: My perspective was very different than some of the guys that were there because I had done Somalia. I thought it was the lap of luxury. I heard guys when I first got there—when I got there at the end of January I heard soldiers complaining that—and we weren’t eating out of ration packs in Bosnia either. We were three fresh cooked meals a day out of the kitchen. I heard some of the soldiers complaining that they had spaghetti three days in a row. Well, [laughs] I heard that and thought, “Man, oh, man!”

INTERVIEWER: Did you have many people in this rotation that had been on previous tours in the former Yugoslavia?

CASE: Yeah, just about everybody.

INTERVIEWER: What were their perspectives? Was there much of a difference from previous tours?

CASE: It was a lot safer, really, it was a lot safer. I know that from talking to friends of mine. A guy who had been part of the last UNPROFOR Contingent, a friend of mine, a Transportation Officer, he was leading a convoy. He got stopped at a checkpoint and he had a 14-year-old kid pointing a gun at his temple and the kid was half drunk. Loaded weapon. They finally got through the checkpoint and I knew this from watching the news, various battalions groups had been mortared. You've heard about the Medak Pocket in '92. Yeah, night and day, absolutely night and day compared to UNPROFOR days and a lot of the guys had commented on that. For myself, I never once felt scared. The feeling that I had a few times when I was in Somalia, I never once felt anything close to that, never did.

INTERVIEWER: To turn to command and control, the Canadian Brigade was under the operational control of the British Divisional HQ?

CASE: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have direct dealings with that HQ or were your dealings with NDHQ?

CASE: Both. Probably more so with NDHQ because, in addition to being Brigade HQ, we were also Canadian Contingent HQ. To a large extent I was occupying exactly the same position I had done three years before, so in many ways it was like, 'I remember all this,' and I just carried on and I knew who to talk to and they knew me and that was that. For the Brits though, we were a long ways away from where the majority of their troops were and, apart from having to request movement credits from them, you've done Germany you're familiar with the movement credit system?

INTERVIEWER: To move vehicles…

CASE: to move vehicles along the main supply route. But to a large extent, on my side at least, there wasn't a whole lot of day-to-day talking with the Brits. I talked far more with J-4 Move.

INTERVIEWER: Now what about downward? You obviously had fairly detailed workings with the National Support Element. What about the Czech and the British Battle Groups?

CASE: Again, not so much. Largely they tended to run their own operations. The Czechs, there was a little bit of a language barrier. There weren't many Czech officers that spoke English. We had a couple of Liaison Officers from the Czechs working with us. While they had done a language course in Canada, I think at Borden surprisingly enough, there was still a certain degree of a language barrier. But there really wasn't a whole lot of support that we could provide them. As I remember it, I don't remember having a whole lot of dealings with either the Brits that were in the Brit Battle Group that we had in the brigade or the Czechs. It was mostly Canadian stuff on the Log side, largely.

INTERVIEWER: Among the Canadians, what was the state of morale, state of discipline of the Canadian troops?

CASE: Well, by and large they had good leaders. In fact, the guy who commanded the Rifle Company just took over as the Brigade Commander in Pettawawa. The engineers I knew. Once we got in there and set up, people were always busy, but…. I think probably the biggest morale issue was that we were dry. Maybe it's a sad commentary on how we socialize, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Not even the strict two beers a day?

CASE: No, nothing, nothing and it's funny, but it made a difference. It really did because we were still confined to the camp. There was a no-walking-out policy. Of course, it would have been the same way in Mogadishu, kind of like being in jail really, couldn't go anywhere. We had pop, we could watch movies, but it was funny. It would have been nice just to been able to have a beer after working during the day. For me, the working hours weren't as long as they were in Somalia but then again the workload wasn't anywhere near as heavy. The dry policy, I thought – I understand the reasons behind it, but I think that if soldiers really want to drink, they will. They will find a way and it will go underground and there were a couple of guys that were caught and they were charged and they got sent home. I think the way it was done in Mogadishu, far more than Belet Huen because in Belet Huen, like I said, the controllers weren't there. But in Mogadishu for the vast majority of the time I was there it was really tightly controlled. I thought that was a good way to do it because when you got a bunch of guys and all they are doing is working, it's nice to be able to just depressurize a little bit and sit down. Again, maybe it's just a sad commentary on us, but doing it over a pop just doesn't seem to do it.

INTERVIEWER: What other sorts of amenities were available for Canadians in the camps?

CASE: We had movies. There was television. Contact home was a whole lot better. I could pick up my telephone at my desk and talk to my wife via government line almost any time I wanted to. When I was in Somalia – I mentioned when we were talking about Somalia that we used satellite telephone to call home. Well, you could call once a week and talk for five minutes or you could call every other week and talk for ten. My wife and I picked option B, but there wasn't a limit, at least for us. There wasn't a limit like that in Bosnia. E-mail was still pretty rudimentary. We didn't have a computer in the house when I went to Bosnia. It was a whole lot different. You could talk a lot better. Mail came a whole lot faster. It took three weeks in Somalia. In Bosnia the average turnaround was a week. We had, like, a gym set up with a good variety of weights. Again, we could go out running outside the camp, which was nice. It was nice to be able to get out of the camp, even if it was just for a run. Slightly different scenery. That was about it. It was pretty basic. Actually, it was boring.

INTERVIEWER: So the job was boring and off duty was boring as well [both laugh]. Were there any leave centres established…

CASE: [Laughs] That doesn't sound too good does it? [Both laugh] We were bored silly. We came, we saw, we went. I can only speak for what I was doing. Getting everything set up was busy. There was always stuff to do. From my perspective, once we were set up, it really did become very routine.

For R&R, we had an R&R centre initially set up in Budapest. I went there, great town. We also set up another one at Rijeka, which is in Croatia. It's a port city right on the Dalmatian coast. Also a really good set up and it was pretty much the same deal. You work for 40 days, you get an R&R. We also had a thing called LTA, Leave Travel Assistance. When I was in Somalia you were allowed to be away for a total of two weeks. By the time you factored in travel time, it worked out to about 11 or 12 days at home. We had three full weeks when I was in Bosnia, so I can get home for three weeks, which was great.

We introduced myself to the kids. My youngest daughter forgot who I was [interviewer laughs], she did. She was about a year and a half. She had forgotten who I was. My oldest daughter, my wife had told her that she was going to pick me up in Ottawa. She stayed down there that night. We had someone looking after the kids. My oldest was in pre-school, she said, "The next day, daddy and I are going to come and we are going to pick you up from school." We showed up and it was around 11:30. The kids come out and I see her on the other side. She's about 50 feet away and she's looking around and she saw me and she just screamed 'DADDY' and she's running at me. She's wearing a blue coat, she's this little blue streak and she launched herself about six feet out from me, just about knocked me over. Everyone in the playground was crying – all the moms, teachers. Hell, I was crying. She wouldn't let me out of her sight and that was nice. It was nice to be able to come home for three weeks.

I knew I had to go back, the difference was, when I went back I knew when we were coming home more or less because we were given…. It wasn't like Somalia where we went on an open ended contract. We were told, "You're going to be there for six months." So we knew roughly when we were coming home. Like I said, the amenities in Bosnia were a hell of a lot better than Somalia. Going back to Somalia after I had been home, that was tough, that was hard, because I knew exactly what I was going back to and we didn't know when we were coming home. So yeah, we were able to take time off.

INTERVIEWER: Can you now describe the re-deployment back to Canada? This was a one-to-one rotation with the next group coming in?

CASE: Yeah, that's right. A flight would come in from Canada with a bunch of guys from 5 Brigade on it and it would go back to Canada with a bunch of our guys on it and the flights were staggered. These flights would occur every two or three days.

INTERVIEWER: Where would these flights be from? What town in Bosnia?

CASE: Where were they flying into? Let's see, where did we go out of? Zagreb. We would fly into Zagreb and we would bus them from Zagreb into our area. It was about a two or three hour drive. That's how it went. This happened over the course of a two or three week period. While this was going on, operational handovers are occurring as organizations would come in. It was really closely co-ordinated with the operational staff because they wanted to do this like a relief in place would be done in a wartime type of scenario.

INTERVIEWER: So all the equipment stayed in place?

CASE: That's right. We had taken over a bunch of equipment from UNPROFOR. There was no sense in sending that back to Canada if we were going to need it, but a bunch of equipment did come from Canada. A lot of the Brigade HQ stuff, I mean, it all came out of Petawawa. While we were in Bosnia, the guys who had backfilled behind us in Petawawa were working with the National Staffs to reconstitute the Brigade HQ because we pretty much stripped it bare of the radio vans, radios, crypto equipment, a whole whack of stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Personally, you were one of the last in. Were you one of the last out?

CASE: Yep, that's the way it works [both laugh]. Yeah, when you're the movements guy, that's the way it works. Typically, you're last in, last out. Somalia was a little different because of the way things were done there, it was a lot faster. That's pretty much how it worked. Over all the mission, for me, again night and day compared to the first one. I found it far easier, but maybe it was because I'd already done one and it was fairly tough.

END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum, Oral History Program, interview with Chris Case. Tape two, side two. Can you tell us something about your views on the quality of the officers and the NCOs on the Bosnia deployment and perhaps compare that with the earlier Somalia deployment?

CASE: Sure. They were obviously different personalities for the most part. I could probably talk about the both of them at the same time. By and large, what I saw was first rate. Very, very professional. I worked mostly on the logistics side of course, so those are the ones I'm most familiar with. The initiative and the ingenuity that some of these guys had, some of the younger NCOs, absolutely amazing. Some of the Traffic Techs I worked with in Somalia – we didn't have that many. I watched a young master corporal. I say young, he was probably about the same age I was. He pretty much ran our little part of the airport single handed for the better part of a couple of months. Absolutely first rate. The commander that I worked for in Somalia, Serge Labbé, very impressive guy. One of these guys who has a real command presence. I thought for sure when I worked

with him he was going to be Chief of Defence Staff. Everything about him pointed in that direction and, as we know, that didn't happen.

Bosnia was the first time I came across the current Chief of Defence Staff, Rick Hillier, he was our Deputy Commander. He had been there in UNPROFOR days. He impressed me then. He still impresses me. In fact, he became my Brigade Commander in Petawawa the summer that we came back from Bosnia. He took over as Brigade Commander. I worked for him the next two years. Probably the best general I have ever seen, in every respect. His ability to deal with soldiers, talk to people, he had a way of making people feel comfortable and he leads from the front. I don't remember coming across too many that I didn't have a whole lot of time for.

INTERVIEWER: How would you compare the quality of the Canadians that were on these missions with some of the other nationalities?

CASE: I didn't see the Brits that much or the Czechs that much in Bosnia so I can't really comment. In Somalia I worked with a number of different Americans. The US Marine Corps, I would work with them again any day of the week. They're in many ways a lot like the Canadians. I guess that sort of comes from being viewed as somewhat second-class citizens by their Navy, but I don't know. I don't know if that's a self-perception or the Navy views it that way. The staff sergeants and gunnery sergeants, I don't think I worked with a guy above the rank of gunnery sergeant for the first three weeks I was in Mogadishu, and they were excellent. No different than any Canadian NCO that I've ever worked with at that rank level.

Some of the US Army folks that I worked with, I remember I was really ticked off one time. We had requested some low-beds to offload a ship that was coming in and this American lieutenant that I was dealing with, basically something had happened and they reneged at the last minute and she had known that they weren't going to be able to do it for quite some time and they told us at the last second. I remember being really ticked off at her. I basically went up one side of her and down the other. I said, "In the Canadian Army, this would never happen. We tell people a head of time." But that's one person. I didn't then, and I don't now, judge the US Army by that. A lot of the Army folks that I dealt with are really good.

The Australians were our equals in Somalia. I saw the Australians a fair bit, good tough soldiers. Again, they're small like us. They're a Commonwealth country. One country that really impressed me were the Italians, surprisingly. As a historian, I've read about the Italian experience during the Second World War, which was pretty spotty. Some really, really good units and some really, really bad units. What I saw there, the Italian paratroopers, they were good from what I good tell. They were good, really, really good.

The Pakistanis, conscript soldiers. You asked me before if I was ever scared. I told you about the one time. There were others. The Pakistanis had had these little civilian pattern pick up trucks, like a Toyota or something like that, little things. And they had a roll bar and what they did was get a hunk of rope and they would tie a machinegun to this

roll bar. Not very high tech. Well, they would park a conscript soldier behind the gun and when they went out on the streets, of course, he would lock and load. There's a round up the spout and a conscript solder standing behind the gun. We would be driving along in one of our vehicles and one of these Pakistanis vehicles would come out from a side road and be right behind you, 15-20 feet. You're looking back and instead of canting the muzzle of the gun off to the side, you were staring down the muzzle of a machine gun [interviewer laughs]. With a belt of ammunition loaded – and you knew it was loaded – and there's this guy standing there and that was pretty scary.

INTERVIEWER: Well, to conclude, can you tell us or give us your ideas on what you have learned personally from your experiences in these deployments? What do you retain from…

CASE: [Laughs] I'll tell you what I tell the 20 year-olds that I'm in class with at the University of Ottawa with in the education upgrading that I'm doing. My education started there, in Mogadishu. Before I went, I thought I knew something about the world. I've studied history, I read the newspapers, watched TV news. I felt myself as a reasonably well-informed human being. The first 24 hours in Mogadishu I realized that I didn't know anything and my education really started there. I saw how the other half lived, up close. In our house here – you have children so you'll appreciate this – sometimes the girls are not really thrilled with what mother has on the plate at dinnertime. Well, when I grew up – you may have experienced the same thing – my parents would say something like, "There are starving kids in Africa who would be more than happy to have what you have so eat." I haul out pictures and I show the girls. I've got pictures of – these kids are much older now today and the girls are much older now so I don't do this as much anymore.

I learned a lot about myself. I learned some things that surprised me a bit. I learned about what it's like to be on active operations. I learned how other people react under those circumstances. I think I learned I am a little tougher than maybe I thought I was in some regards and not as tough as I thought I was in others. I think I can relate to veterans. I haven't experienced what a Second World War or Korean vet has experienced and I wouldn't begin to make any sort of comparison, but I think I have a bit of an understanding of what it was like for them. Certainly the separation from family. I spent a year away from my wife and kids. It took a long time for me to get to know my oldest daughter. She was two months when I left and she was eight months when I came back. It took a long time for that relationship to really grow. So yeah, personally I've learned a lot. Things you can't learn anywhere else or anyway else. You have to go out and do it and you know that yourself. As hard as some of it was, and as boring as some aspects of it were, I don't regret doing it. I feel that I can say that and I'm just speaking personally here, I've done my fair share of heavy lifting. I think that in that regard I can hold my head up with guys like my dad who did his fair share when issues were a lot more serious.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Chris Case on 22 August, 2006.

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